

4295 J. A. 52  
*Church-Music an Help to Devotion.*

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4294  
A

# S E R M O N

Preached in the Parish-Church of

ST. MICHAEL, *Bassishaw,*

On SUNDAY, May 29, 1763.

At the Opening of an ORGAN lately erected in  
the said CHURCH.

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By SAMUEL FAWCONER, M. A.  
Assistant Preacher at *Grosvenor-Chapel*, and Lec-  
turer of St. *Michael, Bassishaw.*

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“ Ουδεν ούτως ανιγησι ψυχην, και πτεροι, και της γης απαλ-  
“ λαττει, και των του σωματος απολυει δεσμων, και φι-  
“ λοσοφειν ποιει, και παντων καταγγελων των βιωλικων, ως  
“ μελος συμφωνιας, και ρυθμω συγκειμενον θειου ασμα.”  
CHRYSOStOM. Hom. Pf. xli.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. RIVINGTON, in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*,  
and J. ROBSON, in *New-Bond-street.* 1763.

Church-Music on Help to Devotion.

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At the Opening of an Organ lately erected in



By SAMUEL J. RIVINGTON, M.A.

Assistant Teacher in the Baptist Church, and Lecturer of St. Michael, Basseterre.

CHRISTIANITY IS THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION.  
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PSALM CL. ver. 4. latter Part.

—*Praise him with stringed Instruments and Organs.*

**T**HAT man is a religious creature, a being in whom are implanted the principles of religion, is one of the most pleasing reflections that can enter into the human breast. Tho' the love of society is connatural to his soul, and in many respects conducive to his well-being in the world, he in some measure enjoys this advantage in common only with the brute creation. It is true, the proper exercise of his rational faculties raises him above the level of every class of being, which we are acquainted with in this lower world. But still in how imperfect a light does he appear, when considered only as a rational and sociable being, without the ornamental habit of religion ! A privilege \*, which distinguishes man from man more than reason and sociability distinguish the man from the brute.

Of all the parts of religious worship, one of the most essential and considerable is praise ;

\* " Ex tot generibus nullum est animal præter hominem, quod habeat notitiam aliquam Dei."

TULL. de legibus, l. i.

or that act of homage, wherein we confess and adore those supereminent excellencies of the supreme Being, which constitute the perfection of his nature. His original design in creating and endowing us with rational powers, was to qualify us to magnify his holy name, and tell out with gladness the wonders of his wisdom, power, and goodness. It certainly argues great condescension in him, who is infinite in all perfections, and ever completely happy in himself, to accept of so slender a return for the immense sums which we owe to his munificence. The apprehension therefore of his glorious majesty, and the "*consideration of the great things he hath done for* \*" us, weak, dependent, sinful creatures, (and therefore "*not worthy of the least of all his mercies* †",) call for the warmest acknowledgements of a grateful heart. So that the easy tribute of praise becomes our duty from the principles of natural reason, as well as the institutes of divine revelation ; where it makes a principal figure in the offices of christian devotion.

Now because many blessings of providence are enjoyed in common, the expressions of our gratitude are properly tendered in a public and vocal manner : that so the congregation, uniting in one common address, "*may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify* †" the beneficent author.

\* 1 Sam. xii. 24. † Gen. xxxii. 10. † Rom. xv. 6.



And as the life and soul of religion is true devotion, whatever expedients are found to contribute to this great end, may be lawfully and commendably adopted. And hence, by the consent and practice of the church in all ages, as well before, as since, the coming of Christ, a considerable part of God's public worship has consisted of psalmody, or praising him by vocal, accompanied with instrumental, music.

Music is the science of sounds, arranging them by just intervals and proportions, so as to produce an agreeable entertainment to the ear. To whatever cause men have ascribed the invention of this noble art\*, it is both just and natural to look upon it as a gift from heaven †. Tho' it has been reckoned the eldest ‡ of the learned studies, from a supposition that its original was prior § to the Trojan war: it is found to be of a much earlier invention, its antiquity reaching even beyond the flood ||. For Jubal, the

\* "Artis pulcherrimæ."

QUINTILIAN. Instit. Orat. l. i. c. 16.

† Σήμεν κατά πάντα η μουσική, Θεω ευρημα ουσα.

PLUTARCH. περί μουσικής.

"Musica natura ipsa videtur, ad tolerandos facilius labores, velut muneri nobis dedisse."

QUINTILIAN. l. i. c. 16.

‡ "Et Timagenes author est, omnium in literis studiorum antiquissimam musicen extitisse."

QUINTILIAN. ibid.

§ Before which period those famous musicians (Chiron, Linus, Orpheus, and Amphion,) are reported to have flourished.

|| Which is almost 2000 years further back.

tenth from Adam, is recorded to have been the first author or teacher of it, being called "*the father of all such as handle (or play on) the harp and organ* \*." God, having created the world in that admirable harmony, which it has preserved ever since, was pleased thus early to instruct mankind in the discovery of those things, which, tho' of no immediate necessity to human life, contribute to its elegance †. And tho' this curious and sublime art was probably lost by the flood, it was not long before it emerged again. For the author of the book of Job, who is supposed to write eight hundred years after that event, mentions "*the timbrel, the harp, and the organ* ‡."

As the love of harmony seems to be a natural passion of the human soul, it is no wonder it has ever been "*the delight of the sons of men* §;" being esteemed, admired and || patronized by the greatest and most eminent personages \*\* of all ages. The an-

\* Gen. iv. 21. † Harris's Three Treatises, page 53.

‡ Job xxi. 12. § Eccles. ii. 8.

|| "Lycurgus, durissimarum Lacedæmoniis legum author, musices disciplinam probavit."

QUINTILIAN. l. i. c. 16.

\*\* Alexander the Great, Alfred the learned Saxon, Henry the VIIIth, and Charles the Ist.

"Claros nomine sapientiæ viros nemo dubitaverit studiosos musices fuisse."

QUINTILIAN. ibid.

"Duces maximos et fidibus et tibiis cecinisse traditum est."

ibid.

cient

cient Greeks, (particularly the Athenians \*, who were the most learned and refined,) held it in the highest estimation.

The music of the ancients bore a part in the magnificence of triumphs, the jollity of festivals †, and the solemnity of funerals. And it was likewise consecrated to the solemn service of their gods ‡; insomuch that scarce a religious rite was performed by any nation, barbarous or polite, without the combined assistance of voices and instruments. According to a sacred § writer, all kinds || of music were used at “ *the dedication of the golden image, that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon* ||.”

\* That assertion of Mr. Addison, “ Plato banishes music out of his commonwealth,” (Spectator, Vol. I. N<sup>o</sup> 18.) must not be understood of music in general, but only of its abuses which were crept into the theatre.

“ Οἱ δὲ νῦν τὰ σέμνα αὐτῆς (scil. μουσικῆς) παρῆλθοντες, αὐτὴ τῆς ἀνδρωδὸς ἀκροῦς καὶ θεσπιαίας, καὶ θεοῖς φίλης, καὶ λαοφιλῆς καὶ καλῆς εἰς τὰ θεῖα εἰσάγουσι. Τοιγαρτοὶ Πλάτων ἐν τῷ τρίτῳ τῆς πολιτείας δυσχεραίνει τὴν τοιαύτην μουσικὴν.”

PLUTARCH. περὶ μουσικῆς.

“ Non frustra Plato civili viro, quem πολίτικον vocant, necessariam musicen credidit.”

QUINTILIAN. lib. I. c. 16.

And Aristotle recommends it as a distinguishing accomplishment, and an essential ingredient in the education of Youth.

† See Patrick's Paraphrase on Eccles. ii. 8.

“ Veterum Romanorum epulis fides, ac tibia adhibere moris fuit.”

QUINTILIAN. ibid.

‡ “ Et testimonio sunt clarissimi poetæ, apud quos inter regalia convivia laudes heroum, ac deorum ad citharam canebantur.”

ibid.

§ The prophet Daniel.

|| “ The cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer.” Chap. iii. 5, 7, 10, 15.

|| Chap. iii. 1, 2, 7.

Not-

Notwithstanding the cavils and exceptions of gainfayers, which have a shew of prejudice and moroseness, rather than of reason and justice, music has such a tendency to heighten the natural impressions of religion, that it has been the constant usage of the church of God from the earliest times. Throughout the Old Testament we find that the chief, if not the only, use of it was in the worship of the true God. The first Psalm we read of in holy writ is a composition of Moses, being a song of triumph for the happy deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptian yoke, and their safe passage through the Red Sea\*. It was sung in courses, or parts, by above six hundred thousand men, and as many women; Moses being at the head of the men, and his sister "*Miriam, the prophetess, with timbrels and with dances* †," leading up the women. At this distance of time, it is hardly possible to image to ourselves such an incredible variety of voices, hymning to the Deity in the most sublime strains of poetry, and a style of harmony adapted to that awful occasion, without being in raptures, and joining as it were in the chorus.

The whole Book of Psalms, which is one of the noblest compositions in the world, for sublimity of sentiment, beauty of expression, and ardor of devotion, was confessedly

\* Exod. xv.

† Ibid. ver. 20.



set to music, and sung with variety of instruments.

David \*, the inspired penman of the principal part of them, was so eminently skilled in composing Psalms, and so admirable a performer on the harp, that he is justly styled † “ *the sweet psalmist of Israel.*” We seldom meet him without a Psalm in his mouth, and an instrument in his hand to accompany it. He thought it no misapplication of his time, no disparagement to his royal character, to compose those inimitable odes, which he has left us, in honor of his God. And tho’ the titles of some of them give room to think that they were committed to masters to be set to music : it is certain, he set many of them himself, and afterwards assisted in the performance.

Prompted by his uncommon zeal, or directed by immediate inspiration, he first introduced into the public service the use of musical instruments ‡. And, at the consecration of the temple, his son Solomon followed his example : for we read || that “ *the Levites, which were the singers, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets, and the trumpet-*

\* “ *Erat autem David vir in canticis eruditus, qui harmoniam musicam non vulgari voluptate, sed fidei voluntate, dilexerat.*” AUGUSTIN. de civ. Dei, l. 17. c. 14.

† 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. ‡ 1 Chron. xv. 16. xvi. 4, 42. xxv. 1. || 2 Chron. v. 12.

ers and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord." Hezekiah continued this practice : and we are told \*, " Set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet." And when the foundation of the second temple was laid, " they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites with cymbals to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel ; and they sang together by course †. In short, to the time of Christ's coming, and even till the destruction of the second temple ‡, the church of God constantly used both vocal and instrumental music in their public worship.

It seems to have been a religious art, reserved for the practice of his chosen people ; who accordingly raised it to the utmost perfection. " *The songs of Zion*" || were justly held in the highest repute. \*\* " Admirable " was the order of their fingers and masters, " the disposition of their choirs, and the setting of their hymns to music." They had a great †† variety of instruments : since in the psalm, from which the text is taken, the people are called upon to praise the Lord

\* 2 Chr. xxix. 25. † Ezra iii. 10, 11. ‡ By Titus Vespasian. || Ps. cxxxvii. 3. \*\* Kircher Musurgia univ. Tom. I. l. 2. c. 4. †† Eccles. ii. 8.

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with (no less than) eight or ten different kinds\*. The order of Levites, to the amount of † four thousand, was instituted by God himself: and of course they were *instructed in the songs of the Lord, to prophecy, or give thanks and praise the Lord with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals, the instruments which David made* ‡. They were divided by lot into twenty four different orders, under their respective chiefs, and destined to their several offices, both as to kind and time: two hundred fourscore and eight being appointed to teach the rest to sing and play ||. And as the exercise of this art was solely confined to this order from generation to generation, many of which were probably born with a natural genius for it, and that formed under the most skilful teachers, and improved by constant practice all their life: they must at length have become eminent masters, and performed with that delicacy, exquisiteness, and perfection, that the harmony of the old

\* It is an unreasonable objection, which Mr. Le Clerc makes to the ancient Hebrew music, as irregular and unharmonious, consisting only of some sacred hymns, which David had instituted. For, as Kircher observes, “ Neque  
“ credi potest innumerabilem summâ sapientiâ constructorum  
“ instrumentorum musicorum supellectilem servisse tantum ad  
“ inconditos quosdam & artis omnis expertes sonos producen-  
“ dos: neque verisimile est, instrumenta unius alicujus chori  
“ omnia unisonam vocem, sed miro ingeniosoque contextu,  
“ acutis gravibus vocibus harmonicè temperatis, *πρὸς ἀλλήλους*  
“ harmoniam reddidisse.” Kircher. *ibid.*

† 1 Chron. xxiii. 5. ‡ 1 Chron. xxv. 7, 3, 1. xxiii. 5.  
|| 1 Chron. xxv. 7, 8.

Jerusalem could be exceeded by nothing but that of the new.

Thus the honor of religious music among the Jews stands on the pillars of truth, and is supported with divine authority; since both the songs and instruments were not only of God's own appointment, but expressly approved of by the usual external evidence of his presence. For at the consecration of the temple, "*when they lift up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord: the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud,*" or, as the next verse explains it, with "*the glory of the Lord* \*." And after the mention of Hezekiah's restoration of the long neglected service of God, it is added, "*For so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets* †." What David had ordained was approved by the prophets Gad and Nathan, and by authority from God settled in the course of divine service.

In conformity to the custom of the Jewish temple, religious music was adopted, and continued by the christian church. It was recommended by the example of our Lord, the great pattern of perfection, who joined with the Jews in the use of it, and expressly *sung an hymn* ‡ with his disciples a little before his passion. The devotion of the apo-

\* 2 Chron. v. 13, 14.

† 2 Chron. xxix. 25.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 30.



files and primitive christians consisted chiefly of divine hymns and songs of praise \*. St. John has introduced it into heaven, or, according to the opinion of some, the millennial Paradise on earth. In his prophetic visions he † represents harps and hymns as the constituent parts of the devotion of the heavenly sanctuary. Which descriptions, whether real or metaphorical, confessedly belonging to the evangelical state, are an argument for the use of vocal and instrumental music under the gospel. There is indeed something in it so divine, so resembling the religion of heaven, which is all praise, that the blessed above disdain not to hold communion with us in these exercises of our devotion here below. In allusion to which the psalmist says, "*Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee ‡:*" that is, "in the public assembly, in the presence of the holy angels, which attend there, the witnesses of our performances, and assistants and partners of our praises ||." And in the Paradise Lost § harmony

\* Pliny the younger, in a letter to the Emperor Trajan, giving an account of the christian worship, says, "Adfirmabant hanc fuisse summam vel culpæ suæ, vel erroris, quod essent soliti statim ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem." Lib. 10. Ep. 97.

† Rev. v. 8, 9. xiv. 2, 3. xv. 2, 3. ‡ Ps. cxxxviii. 1. || Hammond's and Nichol's paraphrase on D°.

§ "And in their motions harmony divine  
" So smooths her charming tones, that God's own ear  
" Listens delighted." B. 5. l. 625, &c.

mony is introduced so charmingly smoothing her tones, as to delight the ear even of God himself.

When organs were first introduced into the christian church, the learned are not agreed \*. Tho' in the infancy of christianity the poor afflicted † state of its professors forbids us to look for ornaments in their places of worship : yet no sooner was the church settled, and began to flourish, than organs were revived by the authority and example of some great and good men ‡. Afterwards they grew into general use : and have since being allowed and retained in most reformed churches in Europe, where they are able to bear the charge of erecting them.

Now if, by the direction and approbation of God himself, the royal prophet appointed the use of musical instruments in his public service ; if Christ joined with the church of that age, and never spake against it ; if it has been the practice of the church ever since,

Οι δε πανηγυριοι μολπη, θεον ιλασκοιτο,  
Καλον αειδοντες παινονα, κούροι Αχαιων,  
Μελποινες Εκαιεγον. Ο δε φρενα τετραπ' ακουων.

Homer. Iliad. α. lin. 472, &c.

\* Which may be urged as an argument for their antiquity.

† The Jews under the Babylonish captivity hung up their harps upon the willows, and refused to sing the songs of Zion in a strange land. Ps. cxxxvii.

‡ St. Ambrose, the reputed author of (the hymn called) Te Deum, appointed them at Milan, where he was Bishop, towards the latter end of the 4th century. ( A. D. 373.)

And if this usage is of so long standing, and perfectly consistent with the purity of the gospel worship, it is unjustly charged with the superstition of popery, to which it was so much prior.

and

and no scripture forbids it: the original reasons for its continuance still subsist.

And as the lawfulness of sacred music cannot be denied, we shall the more readily acknowledge its expediency, if we consider, that, by its agreeable and improving influence on the mind, it is calculated “*for the edifying of the body of Christ* \*.”

For first, it contributes to the better performance of singing, by rendering it more orderly and harmonious. In a mixt congregation there are many, who have neither the advantage of a natural ear for music, nor any previous assistance from the instructions of its professors. And whilst some sing one tune, and some another, they create discord and confusion. And tho’ it has been asserted with confidence, that God is probably delighted with the variety of modes of worship, which divide the rational world: it seems repugnant to reason, that the discord of jarring voices should ever be so agreeable to a God of order, as preserving “*the unity of the spirit* †,” and praising him with one heart and one voice. Now we find by experience, that music only can cover and overpower the irregular harshness of the multitude, and tune the dissonance of voice into an agreeable harmony.

2. It likewise helps to awaken our attention, and compose our thoughts, and

\* Ephes. iv. 12.

† Ephes. iv. 3.

thereby

thereby prepares the heart for the admission of divine truths. As the best things do not always excite our regard in proportion to their dignity or value : so the more inattentive votary is not so strongly affected with the public worship in its native simplicity, as when accompanied with this additional ornament ; which gives a solemnity to the service, inspires the mind with a reverential awe, and impresses it with more permanent, as well as more agreeable sensations, than a mere lifeless transient form of words \*. While we are in the body, we are so immersed in the cares and pleasures of this life, that we cannot altogether divest ourselves of them, even during our attendance in the sanctuary. Our spirits, naturally dull and drowzy in the business of devotion, are apt to droop and languish with the length and repetition of it. And even the most devout sometimes forget themselves by unaccountable surprize, or the violent impression of foreign objects, so as to need some powerful charm to recollect their straggling thoughts, and recall them to their duty. Now the solemn and awakening sounds of music calm the tumults of the breast, disperse the busy swarm of impertinent ideas, relieve, and invigorate the spirits; and by a pleasing kind of violence force a consent to the business in which we are engaged.

\* See Chrysostom. Hom. on Pf. cl.



3. It is of singular use in stirring up and enlivening our devotion. There is such a secret charm in well-composed and animated music, that it controuls and actuates every power of the human soul \*. Its influence over the nobler passions is incredible. For it inspires or awakens, calms or raises, them in a manner almost imperceptible: and yet with a force so irresistible, that there is hardly a soul by nature so unfeeling, or by art so steeled against its efficacy, as to be able to withstand its all-powerful summons.

There seems to be a natural sympathy between the human passions and musical sounds: which from the tremulous body “floating in quivering circles” to the ear, are thereby conveyed to the spiritual faculties of the soul; and the animal spirits, which serve to excite the affections, are raised or depressed according to the impressions they receive. Thus the rough martial sounds of drums and † trumpets enflame the breast with courage; whilst the

\* The powers of music are either felt or known by all men, and are allowed to work strangely upon the mind and the body, the passions and the blood, to raise joy and grief, to give pleasure and pain, to compose disturbed thoughts, to assist and heighten devotion itself. Sir Wm. Temple’s Essay on poetry.

The scriptures, in the instances of Saul and Elisha, assert its usefulness to suppress the evil passions of anger, melancholy, &c. 1 Sam. xvi. 14. 2 Kings iii. 15.

† Traditum est exercitus Lacedæmoniorum musicis accensos modis. Quid autem aliud in nostris legionibus cornua

the grand and affectionate notes of the sacred instrument warm the heart into devotion. As the loud and majestic sounds inspire a reverential fear, the insinuating sweetness of the softer airs soothe into love. And while we tender our heart-felt praise in the lofty strains of divine poetry, with our attention awakened, and our voices harmonized, by the agreeable symphony of the organ, "nobly soft, and sweetly strong," the mind is filled with great conceptions, refined and elevated above the satisfactions of sense to the contemplation and ambition of future glories; and the heart, captivated and elated with the feelings of gratitude, glows with a sacred warmth, and our praise is advanced into rapture \*.

This is the original and proper intention of church-music †: that, when "*we render to God the calves of our lips ‡,*" we should do it with a lively attention of mind, and a de-

nua ac tubæ faciunt? Quorum concentus quanto est vehementior, tantum Romana in bellis gloria cæteris præstat.

QUINTIL. l. 1. c. 16.

\* St. Augustin thus confesses to God the transports of his devotion from the ravishing harmony of the church; "Quantum flevi in hymnis & canticis tuis, suave-sonantis ecclesiæ tuæ vocibus commotus acriter. Voces illæ influebant auribus meis, & eliquabatur veritas in cor meum, & exæstuabat inde affectus pietatis."

Confess. l. 9. c. 6.

† Το γὰρ οὐκ το πρώτον μουσικῆς καὶ καλλίστου ἔργον ἢ εἰς τοὺς θεοὺς εὐχαριστοῦν ἐστὶν ἀποδείξαι.

PLUTARCH. περὶ μουσικῆς.

‡ Hosea xiv. 2.

vout

vout fervency of soul. The psalmist therefore thus exhorts, "*sing ye praises with understanding* \*;" and the apostle to the Gentiles, "*sing, and make melody in your heart* †;" "*sing with grace*, that is, gracefulness, or a becoming thankfulness, *in your hearts to the Lord* ‡." The heart must be perfect unison with the voice, and join in concert with it, to make the harmony complete. For tho' we sing "*with the tongues of angels* §," and equal the melody of cherubim and seraphim: unless our attention and affections are raised, and animated, suitably to the import and design of what we offer, we are in the sight of God but "*as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal* §." Whenever David designs to celebrate God's praises, and summons all his powers to the pleasing task: he first takes care to tune his heart. "*My heart, says he, is fixed, I will sing, and give praise; awake up, my glory* \*\*." He often calls his tongue his glory, because it is the chief instrument of glorifying God. The noblest use we can put it to, is to employ it in the praise and adoration of the most excellent majesty of its donor: in whose honor we are expected to exert all our faculties, and "*glorify him in our body and in our spirit, which are his* ††." If we consider the infinite

\* Ps. xlvii. 7. See also 1 Cor. xiv. 15. † Eph. v. 19.  
 ‡ Col. iii. 16. § 1 Cor. xiii. 1. § Ibid.  
 \*\* Ps. cviii. 1. lvii. 7, 8. †† 1 Cor. vii. 20.



distance between God and us, between vile, and sinful creatures, and the dread sovereign of the universe; before whose throne "*the seraphim cover their faces* \*," and all the host of heaven "*fall down and cast their crowns* †," (as unable to bear the glory of his majestic presence :) we see the reasonableness of approaching him in this holy exercise with a reverential affection of soul, and a suitable gesture of body. And hence, in all ages of the world, *standing* † has been the universal posture of praise: as the erection of the body is a proper emblem to represent the elevation of the heart to God. There are many passages in the Psalms immediately addressed to God, which in rehearsing we adopt for our own petitionary ejaculations, or tributary acknowledgments. And therefore we stand up, when we repeat one version of the Psalms; and why not, when we sing the other? However prevalent the custom of sitting, it is improper on all accounts: for it is a gesture of mourning, a sign of equality, and has the appearance of an indevout and irreverent mind.

\* Isa. vi. 2.

† Rev. iv. 10.

† By David's appointment (1 Chron. xxiii. 30. 2 Chron. v. 12. xx. 19) the Levites office was to "*stand every morning and at even to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel*:" and all the people observed the same reverent posture, 2 Chron. vii. 6. In the vision of Isaiah (vi. 2) the seraphim are represented standing. And in St. John's various representations of their services, (Rev. xv. 2, &c.) the angels constantly appear in uniform gestures of adoration; standing, or using a reverence correspondent thereto.

Psalmody



Psalmody is one of the sublimest parts of divine worship, a most delightful exercise to employ the heart and tongue of a reasonable creature \*. When we assemble with a professed intention of praising God; how can we deny ourselves the exalted pleasure of bearing a part, and continue on our seats with a dull insensibility and a stupid indifference? Must we impute this neglect to a natural indolence, or to the injudicious manner of conducting our praises? For it often happens, that the instrumental performer, designed to assist the unskilful singer, misleads and disconcerts him, and, instead of moving, but manly strains, (fit for a martyr to play, and an angel to hear,) runs into such trivial conceits †, (to shew his dexterity ‡,) as are foreign to the subject, and actually profane the service. Oftimes the leader of the congregation, whose business it is to appoint the psalm, professing to sing to the praise and glory of God, entirely defeats the design of the duty: when, instead of general subjects, set to easy, well known tunes, he fixes on such as are uncommon and difficult; or adapted to matter, in which the greatest part of the congregation cannot join; or keeps on

\* Ps. cxxxv. 3. cxlvii. 1.

† "Light quirks of music, broken, and uneven." *Pope*.

‡ "An ill-timed levity of air, and a foolish pride of execution, disgusts the rational hearer, and dissipates, instead of heightening, true devotion."

*AVISON* on musical expression, p. 74.

in one invariable track, selecting hymns void of poetic measure, and set to music without either melody or harmony.

It must be owned, in our present collection of psalm tunes there are some exceeding fine compositions. And it were a natural presumption to expect more in a country, where this delightful art is universally esteemed and cultivated: and where there is so much encouragement to improve it, from the rich treasury of a language \*, wonderfully adapted to the gravity or sprightliness of musical composition.

In different ages of the world, many eminent men have distinguished themselves by composing, and singing, divine hymns †. That none might think themselves excused from this pleasing exercise, the holy psalmist calls on all degrees, ages, and sexes, to join in the chearful celebration of their Creator's praise. "*Kings of the earth, and all people, princes, and all judges of the earth, both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord ‡.*"

Knowing himself unequal to the glorious task, he calls in the assistance of all the

Indeed we see no great proof of it in the English metre of Sternhold and Hopkins. And it were to be wished, that a better version were substituted in the room of that obsolete, unpoetic, nonsensical rhapsody, so universally exploded.

† Particularly king David. St. Ambrose, and the emperor Justinian were composers: and Constantine the great, and Theodosius, sung in the christian congregation.

‡ Ps. cxlviii. 11, 12, 13.

works

works of God's hands: "*let every thing, that hath breath, praise the Lord* \*." For irrational animals are delighted with music, and even "*the valleys, (by a bold metaphor,) are said to laugh and sing* †."

It is incumbent on each of us, when we meet "*in the great congregation* ‡," to praise the Lord our common benefactor in the best manner we are able: and for that purpose to stand up, and join the melody of the heart with the harmony of the voice ||; that, in proportion to the superior advantages we enjoy, our devotion may be exemplary, a lively image of the church triumphant. In our solemn services here below, we can propound to ourselves no better exemplar than the heavenly choir: whose constant employment is represented to be "*harping with their harps, and singing a new song* §," or hymn to Christ. And if ever we hope to be admitted to bear a part with them in this delightful, and eternal entertainment, now is the time to qualify ourselves, and tune our souls to harmony.

\* Ps. cl. 6.

† Ps. lxxv. 14.

‡ Ps. xxii. 25.

|| In the earlier and devouter ages of Christianity, the confluence to the public worship was so great, and the consent (2 Chron. v. 12. Rom. xv. 6.) of heart and voice so universal, that the gilded roofs shook, and echoed again.

See JEROM. Com. Ephes. v.

§ Rev. xiv. 2, 3.

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F I N I S.

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